

Changes to AP Federal Funding Under ESSA

Since 1998, the federal government has provided states with dedicated funding to offset the cost of AP Exams for low-income students under a Title I program called the Advanced Placement® (AP®) Test Fee Program. In 2016, this program provided funding to more than 450,000 low-income students for AP Exams.

Beginning in 2017, the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) will eliminate this program and consolidate AP funding with 40 other educational programs under a new Title IV, Part A block grant. *Beginning with May 2017 AP Exams, New York will no longer be able to access funds through the federal AP Test Fee Program.*

What does this mean for students and families?

Because of the federal changes, the out-of-pocket cost of AP Exams in May 2017 may be higher for low-income students than it was in previous years—**potentially costing low-income students \$53 per exam in 2017, compared to \$8 in previous years.** For example, in May 2016 low-income students in New York paid \$8 per exam because a combination of the College Board fee reduction (\$30/exam), federal funding (\$38/exam), and state funding (\$7/exam) made up the difference. The federal funding will no longer be available this year, and the state is still working to determine how much state funding may be available. Some districts may also provide a fee reduction, so students should check with their school to find out exactly how much the exam will cost this year.

What does this mean for districts and schools?

The vast majority (95%) of Title IV, Part A funding will go to districts, which can use these funds to subsidize their low-income students' AP Exam fees starting this year. There are a few things districts need to know:

- **Districts will need to proactively elect to use a portion of their Title IV funding for AP Exam fees, and include this in their applications to the state.** The Title IV Student Support and Academic Enrichment Grants Program is a block grant that gives flexibility to districts to support a broad variety of programs. Districts will need to choose to use a portion of these funds for low-income AP Exam fees. Additional information about acceptable uses of Title IV, Part A funds can be found in the section below.
- **Districts need to plan for the transition and use one year of funding to cover exams in both May 2017 and May 2018.** Because ESSA doesn't take full effect until the 2017-18 school year and Congress didn't want students to not lose access to AP opportunities during the 2016-17 transition, ESSA includes a "Special Rule" that allows districts to use FY2017 Title IV funds to cover AP Exams taken by low-income students during both the 2016-17 and 2017-18 academic years. Consequently, for FY2017, districts will need to use one year of federal funding to cover two years' worth of AP Exams.
- **Schools will see the full per-student cost on their invoices.** In 2016, schools in New York were billed \$8 for low-income AP Exams because the state directly paid \$45 using a combination of state and federal funds. Starting in May 2017, schools will be billed \$53 per low-income AP Exam. They may later be reimbursed by the state and/or districts.
- **Districts can also use Title I carryover funds to subsidize the cost of AP Exams.** Districts with federal Title I funds left over from previous years can use those funds to pay for AP exams for low-income students in May 2017.

Title IV, Part A Student Support and Academic Enrichment Grants Program: Acceptable Use of Funds

This new program, established under Title IV Part A of ESSA, will distribute funding by formula to districts to:

1. Provide students with a well-rounded education.
2. Support safe and healthy students.
3. Support the effective use of technology.

AP and accelerated coursework and exams are explicitly mentioned in the “well-rounded education” category. Districts may use funds to increase student access to and improve student achievement in postsecondary level instruction and exams, including AP and International Baccalaureate (IB) programs; and to reimburse low-income students to cover part or all of the cost of AP and IB Exam fees.

Districts will submit an application to the state department of education explaining how they will use this block grant to meet these three broad priorities. Districts receiving more than \$30,000 will need to complete a needs assessment and must use at least 20% of the overall grant funds to support activities in the first bucket, at least 20% in the second bucket, and a portion of the funds for the third bucket.